



I'm sure by now we've all heard about the Olympic gymnast, Simone Biles pulling herself out of the competition due to concerns for her mental health. It was a bold move! And it's created quite a buzz.

Whether we agree with her decision or not, we have to acknowledge that it has created a robust discussion on wellness, and specifically mental health. While most of us are not high level athletes, it was still very relatable. So many of us have experienced mental health impacts as a result of the pandemic. It was refreshing to hear her story and remember that she's just like the rest of us.

I applaud Simone for using her public platform to open up in a vulnerable way, sharing with the world about the struggles she was facing. This couldn't have been easy. But, she did it anyway. Biles should be commended and made an example of. Despite the mountain of pressure she must have felt while representing her country – she made the call to step back. She decided to speak up and advocate for herself. And this is a step in the right direction towards eliminating the stigma often associated with mental health. For this alone – I think she deserves a gold medal! She is the mental health MVP.

If more people in positions of power and fame begin opening up about mental health, it will become the norm. If we're all talking about it openly and without judgement, the stigma will be eliminated. Without the barrier of stigma, we can make way for more treatment options, resources, and access to care for all.

Mental health is a huge component of overall health, and shouldn't be neglected. There is a direct link between physical and mental health. They often work in tandem. When our physical health is in trouble, we simply take the necessary steps to repair and heal our bodies. We don't typically second guess it, or feel fear of judgement from others. We just take care of it. And, we should treat mental health the same. There should be no shame if your mental health is struggling. It's okay to make yourself a priority. It's okay to take a mental health day. It's okay to seek help. It's okay to talk about it. It's okay to speak up for mental health.

If an Olympic level athlete can make time to care for her mental health in the middle of the ultimate competition, you can too. If you need permission to make your mental health a priority – here it is! Let's strive to be more like Simone Biles and start speaking up for mental health. Let's be advocates and supporters for ourselves and others.

